United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1201
10 August 1992

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council holds consultations to consider requests by United States, United Kingdom, France and Belgium for urgent meeting on humanitarian situation in Iraq.

+ Iraq invites Secretary-General to send representative to Baghdad to "finalize negotiations on Memorandum of Understanding" covering United Nations humanitarian programme in Iraq, including United Nations guards.

+ Commission on Human Rights to hold exceptional session in Geneva from 13 to 14 August to discuss human rights situation in former Yugoslavia.

+ Security Council authorizes enlargement of UNPROFOR's mandate and strength to allow it to perform immigration and customs functions in United Nations Protected Areas in Croatia; "condemns resolutely" abuses of civilian population on ethnic grounds.

+ Secretary-General calls on all parties involved in Afghan conflict to "lay down their arms and begin a dialogue at once", as fighting intensifies in Kabul; two United Nations staff members of Afghan nationality killed yesterday.

+ Secretary-General decides to send another fact-finding mission to Moldova in light of recent developments.

+ Anti-Apartheid Committee marks Day of Solidarity with Women's struggle in South Africa.

+ Preparatory Commission for Law of the Sea resumes work in New York today.

* * *

The Security Council held consultations this afternoon to consider requests by four States -- the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Belgium -- for an urgent meeting of the Council to consider "the situation

(more)

For information media--not an official record

which has arisen" in certain parts of Iraq and which constituted "a threat to peace and international security".

In their letters containing the requests, the four countries expressed deep concern at reports of "continuing repression" of the Iraqi civilian population in many parts of Iraq. They suggested that Mr. Van der Stoel, Special Rapporteur on the United Nations Commission on Human Rights be extended an invitation to attend the Council meeting.

In a letter addressed to the Secretary-General dated 30 July, the Special Rapporteur had expressed particular concern over the need to protect the rights to life and physical integrity of the civilian population in the southern parts of Iraq.

Reacting to that document, the Iraqi authorities, in a letter to the Secretary-General dated 6 August, denounced the Special Rapporteur's report as "full of allegations, lies and fallacies". The Iraqi Representative to the United Nations Abd al-Amir Al-Anbari contended that the measures taken by his Government on behalf of "Marsh Arabs" have had the objective of "protecting the inhabitants of the area and of neighbouring areas from acts of murder, sabotage, and robbery" carried out by "certain groups linked with Iran and some of which are made up of Iranian nationals".

Iraq also rejected the proposal by the Special Rapporteur to dispatch a team of human rights monitors to be deployed in all parts of Iraq. Such a deployment would constitute "an interference in Iraq's internal affairs", the Iraqi Ambassador said.

Security Council consultations on the issue will continue tomorrow afternoon.

Document S/24393,S/24394,S/24395,S/24396,S/24388.

* * *

Iraq has invited Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to send a representative to Baghdad to "finalize negotiations on the Memorandum of Understanding" (MOU), covering United Nations humanitarian programme in Iraq, including the United Nations guards.

A United Nations spokeswoman told correspondents today that the Secretary-General had consequently asked Jan Eliasson, Under-Secretary-General for Emergency Relief Coordination, to leave for the Iraqi capital "with a view to finalizing the extension of the MOU". Mr. Eliasson is expected to begin negotiations in Baghdad on 17 August. Meanwhile, the coordinator for inter-agency humanitarian programme in Iraq is working with the local authorities to prepare for the final negotiations.

The current Memorandum of Understanding expired on 30 June. Since May, United Nations officials have been pressing the Iraqi authorities for its extension.

(more)

* * *

The Commission on Human Rights will hold an exceptional session in Geneva from 13 to 14 August to discuss the human rights situation in former Yugoslavia. The request for convening the session was made by the Ambassador of the United States to the United Nations Office at Geneva, Morris B. Abram, and has obtained the backing of 30 of the 53 member States so far.

The United States Ambassador wrote in a letter to Antoine Blanca, Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights and Director-General of the United Nations Office in Geneva, that "reports of detention camps raise great concern over potentially massive human rights violations". Furthermore, he said, international authorities have been hindered in their efforts to gain access to "sites of alleged brutality".

In order to strengthen the role and efficiency of the Commission, the Economic and Social Council decided in May 1990 to enlarge the Commission from 43 to 53 States and authorized it to meet exceptionally between its regular sessions, provided that a majority of its members so agree. The session of former Yugoslavia is the first exceptional meeting in the Commission's history.

In a related development, the President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Dobrica Cosic, has written to the Secretary-General proposing that an international commission composed of prominent international figures be set up to examine allegations of the existence of "concentration camps" in the former Yugoslavia.

The letter, transmitted by the Chargé d'affaires of Yugoslavia and dated 7 August, refers to "unfounded allegations" and suggests that the commission include former concentration camp victims, for example, Elie Wiesel. He said his country would extend every possible support and assistance to the commission in "the task of examining the plausibility of the claims that such 'concentration camps' are in existence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia".
Document S/24391

* * *

The Security Council on Friday, 7 August, authorized the enlargement of the mandate and strength of the United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR) to allow it to perform immigration and customs functions at the borders of the United Nations Protected Areas (UNPA) in Croatia. Further, it condemned resolutely the abuses committed against the civilian population, particularly on ethnic grounds. It also reiterated its demand that all parties and others concerned cooperate with UNPROFOR in implementing the mandate entrusted to it.

In taking this action, the Council approved the recommendations contained in a report of the Secretary-General on the progress made by UNPROFOR in implementing its mandate in Croatia, the difficulties encountered by the Force and the concerns of the Croatian Government regarding control of its

(more)

* * *

international borders. In that report, the Secretary-General recommended an increase in its civil affairs component by 351 international staff and 487 locally recruited staff and an increased number of civilian police monitors. The Secretary-General had estimated that the cost of the proposed expansion would be approximately $30.9 million from mid-August to mid-October 1992, and after that, approximately $5.9 million monthly.

In a separate development, humanitarian flights into Sarajevo airport - suspended last Tuesday because of heavy shelling - were resumed on Saturday morning. According to UNPROFOR Spokesman a record number of humanitarian flights had landed at Sarajevo airport since the airport's reopening.

* * *

Noting with concern that fighting in Afghan capital, Kabul, had intensified in recent days, the Secretary-General today called on all the parties involved in the conflict to "lay down their arms and a begin a dialogue at once". In a statement issued by his Spokeswoman, Mr. Boutros-Ghali also expressed his "deep sorrow" that two United Nations staff members of Afghan nationality working with HABITAT had been killed yesterday during a rocket attack on Kabul.

The Secretary-General, deploring the toll extracted in lives and property, said it was highly regrettable that after 14 years of war, the people of Afghanistan were still experiencing death, destruction and suffering. He said it was crucial that they begin a dialogue, "so as to find a solution that would bring peace and security to their war-torn country". He warned too that if the United Nations were to continue its humanitarian and other operations in the country, he would expect that the safety and the protection of the United Nations personnel, property and premises would be assured.

He called on the governments of the neighbouring countries and concerned regional organizations to use their influence to help end the tragedy.

Answering questions from the press at Headquarters, the Spokeswoman for the Secretary-General said that United Nations personnel in Kabul were taking steps to ensure their safety today, staying in their homes or in their quarters.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has decided to send Gilberto Schlittler, a senior United Nations official, back to Moldova on a second fact-finding mission to that country. The Secretary-General's decision is in response to a recent request by Moldovan President Mircea Snegur for a new United Nations mission to his country to supervise the implementation of the cease-fire.

(more)